

# #YALIStands4All participants are showing their support for rights

On Human Rights Day (December 10), YALI asked Network members to tell us their stories of when they stood up to bias based on nationality, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, color, physical ability, race, religion, language, and/or economic status. The results so far have been both overwhelming and inspiring!

We would like to share just a few of their stories and hope that they inspire you as well to take a stand for individuals and groups who are suffering human rights abuses in your community.

- Evelyn Appiah Opoku from Ghana said she still encounters resistance to educating girls or encouraging them to take leadership roles. This has contributed to forced marriages at a young age and teenage pregnancies, as well as their acceptance of inferior roles in society. She started a movement called the “Lady of Substance” to teach teenage girls and young ladies about their right to attend school and to give them opportunities to talk to women who have stepped out of traditional roles on the farm and in the home. Despite resistance from traditional leaders, her group has reached over 5,000 young ladies, won over the opinions of some parents, and helped many women find scholarships and school supplies while training others with entrepreneurship skills in tailoring, hair dressing, making beads and other crafts.
- When Mohamed Abdullahi Ahmed Ali from Somalia asked why a coffee shop refused to serve a disabled young man, he was told, “We don’t serve such people here.” Ahmed Ali replied that he wouldn’t be giving them his business. Then he caught up with the young man at a more welcoming cafe and was told, “Thank you for making me people. ... You boosted my self esteem.” Ahmed Ali noticed that the man needed trousers and shoes and took him shopping. He also contacted the authorities about the discrimination he had witnessed. Others joined his boycott. After the coffee shop manager was confronted by local elders and a police officer, he apologized and agreed to change his policy. Thanks to Ahmed Ali, the manager discovered that discrimination is bad for business!
- Keturah Shammah from Nigeria met a 16-year-old girl named Binta who was being forced to drop out of school for an arranged marriage. She started a project called “Girls Education Mission International” to help sponsor education for girls like Binta. She had to defy Binta’s family and community and move her to a boarding house so Binta could be free to study. The family eventually consented when Shammah offered Binta a full scholarship. Today, Binta has not only finished her secondary-level education but is now a trained teacher from one of Nigeria’s renowned colleges of education.
- The sign in the public bar that read “Forbidden to Homosexuals” offended Cameroon’s Yves Cedric Penambou Touoyem, who sees homophobia the same way he sees other forms of bigotry like racism or anti-Semitism. When he witnessed a man get accused of being gay and forced out, he asked the bouncer, “How do you know?” “He walks like a girl,” was the reply. Penambou Touoyem decided to fight back through social media. He took a photo of the sign and posted it on Facebook, and then debated the negative responses he received. “Some of them understood but others were very, very closed,” he said. “Hopefully things will change one day.”
- What if you saw a girl being excluded from sports because she was as good (or better) than the boys? Wilhelmina Abiba Abu-Andani from Ghana met a 10-year-old girl crying near a park after she

was prevented from enjoying her passion: playing football. The girl said, “I am a lady, but I am strong and can do stuff men do.” After she left, Abu-Andani approached the boys, and found not only that the girl was an excellent football player but she scored on them all the time. She saw the opportunity to make the case for gender equality while also explaining to the young boys that they stood to gain from the competition and improve their own performance by learning from her. It worked. They agreed to let her play with them.

- In northeastern Kenya, Abdimahat Ahmed Yusuf found a severely disabled child who couldn’t walk, talk or use sign language to communicate. He faced discrimination from community members, including his own family. Ahmed Yusuf tracked the child to his home and with the support of the religious, community-welfare and youth groups he had mobilized, convinced the boy’s family to let him go to a primary school for children with special needs and get assistance from a sponsoring agency. Ahmed Yusuf has found himself amazed by the complete change he has seen in the child. He can now walk, speak fluently, and is capable of supporting himself. He even talks of being president of his home country (Somalia) someday.

Other YALI Network members just like you are standing up for the human rights of people in their communities who face discrimination and bias. It’s not too late to join them and [tell us](#) about what happened!

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